

IV. ISSUES AND CONCLUSIONS

The most consistent theme to emerge from the consultation exercise reported above is a growing emphasis among EC member states on within-Europe student mobility and academic co-operation. The development of the existing exchange programmes, expansion of ERASMUS to encompass the EFTA countries, and increased East-West interchange through TEMPUS and other schemes, will clearly promote this trend. Views differ among officials of EC member governments on the extent to which it will compete with commitments to North-South partnership, either within the frame of bilateral agreements or as part of multilateral provisions such as those of Lome.

This perception of a Eurocentrist trend is in general supported by the statistics available. Table B compares the numbers of foreign students by continent of origin entering each EC country over a 3-year period. From these figures it can be calculated that intra-Community mobility expanded over the period in question (1985-88) by some 26.25%. Student intake from the African continent increased for some EC countries; but into the Community as a whole it fell by 7.5%. Changes in Community composition and methods of data collection make precise interpretation of the figures difficult, but the direction is clear. It becomes even clearer if we look at the UK as a single receiving country: here, over the same period, intake from the EC rose by 115% while that from Africa fell by 22%.

With regard to the Commonwealth, the picture is less clearcut. Table C shows very little change between 1985 and 1988 in Community intake from the Commonwealth states. Of the total increase of 3%, virtually all is accounted for by the 'developing' Commonwealth according to OECD classification: ie all Commonwealth countries except Britain, Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Hence the relatively static picture encompasses large increases in intake (principally to the UK) from the industrialising countries of Asia: Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore; and masks a 45% decline in recruitment from Nigeria. It must also be noted that, in the case of recruitment to Britain, the largest drop in Commonwealth intake took place before the study period: numbers fell from 44,600 in 1978/79 to 27,900 in 1984/85.

This report concludes by drawing attention, in summary form, to issues which the Commonwealth will particularly wish to consider in the context of educational policy vis-a-vis Europe.

The first point to note is the diversity within the EC in the degree of articulation of any concerted national policy towards the education of foreign students. For some member States it proved impossible in the time available to elicit any national position (in one case we were told we were 'asking Northern European questions in Southern Europe'). Elsewhere, responsibility for policy is distributed over several ministries and exercised at many levels of central and local government, academic bodies and institutions. As documented above, there is substantial public investment in student mobility and educational support, whether through taxpayer subsidy on tuition or targeted scholarship provision as an open or tacit instrument of national policy. This takes place, however, within hugely varying rationales; the terms and assumptions of national debate on foreign students differ correspondingly. The Commonwealth will in turn need to take account of this diversity in arguing its case for the educational interests of its member nationals in Europe.

The second point concerns the concept of 'internationalism' and how this is understood. Some recognise more clearly than others that the movement of people between countries and institutions might not be all that is entailed by internationalism in education. Such movement might in itself, for example, create healthy pressures towards change in domestic educational structures. Related to this is the question of developing alternatives to the traditional pattern of recruiting students from developing to developed countries. A danger to be avoided is that of concentrating on student inflow to Europe at the expense of in-country resource enhancement. The developmental potential of outward academic mobility from Europe to the developing Commonwealth is one among many areas for exploration.

Thirdly, there seems everywhere to be a large information gap in follow-up and monitoring of the long-term effects of international education programmes. There was broad agreement among those consulted for this study that lack of knowledge of outcomes is a serious hindrance to educational

planning. The CSFP Tracer Study (Commonwealth Secretariat 1989) is a valuable but rare exercise. While rigorous evaluation may occasionally be perceived as politically counterproductive from the viewpoint of donor governments or agencies, there is a clear need to develop more sophisticated methodologies than exist at present for evaluating programmes of educational support *from the recipient perspective*.

If outcomes constitute one end of an educational continuum, access in its broadest sense represents the other. Here we would draw attention to a single aspect of access: the issue of gender. The national figures submitted to UNESCO and reproduced here include no reference to gender, although limited gender breakdowns are to be found in the detailed national statistics of some EC members. In view of a) the likelihood that men and women from the developing Commonwealth will be differently situated as regards access and takeup of educational opportunities in Europe, and b) the Commonwealth commitment to enhancement of women's educational/professional opportunities through CHESS and otherwise, the gender dimension of Commonwealth student enrolment in Europe calls for close attention.

Finally, it is worth noting that education itself cannot be divorced from the broader context of changing global economies and labour markets. This obvious fact is well recognised in intra-EC discussion of, for example, credit recognition and the harmonisation of professional qualifications. Nonetheless there may be a case for forceful representations by the Commonwealth to place these broader needs and priorities of its developing members on the European educational agenda.